

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-7012

August 24, 2007

The Honorable Dirk Kempthorne  
Secretary  
Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20240

The Honorable Robert M. Gates  
Secretary  
Department of Defense  
1300 Defense Pentagon  
Washington, DC 20301-1000

Dear Secretaries Kempthorne and Gates:

As you may know, seventy-one wild horses and one antelope were recently found dead on the Tonopah Test Range in southern Nevada. The animals died near a watering hole and initial reports have suggested that the likely cause of death was high levels of nitrate toxicity in the water.

There are strong concerns in southern Nevada that these deaths are the result of serious negligence in the management of the Test Range and the wild horse herds in the area. I ask that a full and thorough investigation be undertaken into the cause of these deaths.

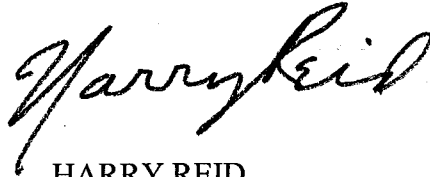
In light of this unfortunate event, I believe that this is also an appropriate time to take a close look at the land and wildlife management practices used on the larger Nellis Air Force Range. While the Air Force holds the primary position in the operations that take place on this land, the same area remains under the purview of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). The BLM is responsible for wild horse and fire management on the Nellis Air Force Range, despite little to no regular access to this vast area.

Similar challenges are faced by the Fish and Wildlife Service in the management of the Desert National Wildlife Refuge. This refuge was originally created to protect populations of bighorn sheep and other rare desert wildlife, yet it is my understanding that the Fish and Wildlife Service has extremely limited access to the entire western half of the refuge because of ongoing military operations.

I raise these issues with no preconception about what the best or most efficient structure is for the management of these lands and their wildlife. However, events like the recent deaths of these seventy-one horses are of major concern. I look forward to learning of the results of your investigation and I hope that by working more closely together that your agencies will be able to help prevent similar events from happening in the future.

My best wishes to you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Harry Reid". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Harry" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Reid".

HARRY REID  
United States Senator